

I call on you to hold an official public hearing in my state.

Before the disastrous 2003 decision to weaken media ownership rules (which a federal court has now overturned), you held only one official public hearing. Further, FCC officials met behind closed doors 71 times with major broadcasters – but only five times with public interest groups. And to justify your actions, you used deceptive, industry-sponsored research data.

The will of Big Media had been heeded at the expense of American citizens and democracy itself. This has to end. Before you rewrite the ownership rules, I demand an official public FCC hearing in my state, impartial and verifiable research, and transparent debates.

It is time to put the needs of democracy – a diverse, skeptical, independent and competitive media system – ahead of profit-hungry media giants.

Sinclair Broadcasting's intention to force its broadcast affiliates to show a video or run a program that clearly attacks a candidate during an election is a clear example of why media ownership rules need to be strengthened so that ownership is more widely distributed. Given Sinclair's power to broadly air beliefs that are in line with those of its executives but not necessarily reflective of the diversity of views of the citizens who reside in areas served by its stations, one might consider the extreme case in which just one corporation owned all television stations in the United States and then applied Sinclair's standards of fairness or balance. Clearly our system of free and fair elections would not be served by such an imbalance in ability to broadcast political views or content. This incident makes me realize more than ever the importance of distributing the use of our public airwaves to as many owners as possible to assure that we are served with diverse opinions and views and not just those of a few.